

**Bloc to bloc**

*'The simplicity of life in a concrete block has a strong appeal in a world where everything else is changing'*



**Farewell Terry and June**

*'The new buyers in the suburbs have a very different set of criteria from their 1930s counterparts'*



**As good as new**

*'It is now extremely hard to find a dilapidated Tuscan farmhouse to restore - that market has come of age'*

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# Anything you can do . . .

Anne Spackman finds Tony Pidgley junior itching to get his hands on part of his father's hugely profitable business

**T**he story most often told about Tony Pidgley junior is that when, on the eve of his first deal for his fledgling housebuilding company, he confided to his dad that he was buying a good site, Tony Pidgley senior snatched it from under his nose for his own company. Pidgley junior was seen to have graduated from the school of hard knocks. The story still makes Pidgley junior cringe.

But today, if you open the boot of Tony Pidgley junior's car, it looks just like his dad's: a mobile office, stacked with the files, papers and hard hats necessary for a 15-hour day on the road.

Of course, Pidgley senior has a bigger boot in his Bentley than Pidgley junior in his BMW, but then he is still the governor (as his son puts it) - for the time being at least.

Last month, Pidgley senior's Berkeley Group bought Pidgley junior's housebuilding firm, Thirlestons, for £15m and made the governor's son, who has only just turned 30, managing director of the hugely profitable Berkeley Homes.

Amid whispers of nepotism and impropriety, the anecdote about the land deal has dominated the gossip.

The young Pidgley says it is true in terms of what happened; he was about to buy a single plot in Weybridge for about £100,000, and his dad got in before him.

"But I don't think his intention was to teach me a lesson," he says. "He will have gone back to the Surrey subsidiary and said, 'why the hell aren't you in on that site Tony's buying. Get on to it now.' His first thought would have been about his own business."

Now their business is the same; it is driving forward a house-building group which has set the standards for the industry, turning in pre-tax profits of £100m this year.

**N**ot that you would think he was joining what is already a market leader when you hear Pidgley junior talk; he is buzzing with new ideas about everything from the sales and marketing systems to the doorknobs. He is already changing the logo, introducing e-mail - "I can't believe all these pieces of paper I keep getting" - and buying a "people carrier" for use by his fellow directors. "One management meeting in four should be on the road," he says.

"I always insisted on occasional weekend tours by

directors at Thirlestons. Otherwise you end up with your team never seeing the shop front."

Father and son are currently spending a lot of time at the shop front - or the coalface, as the senior Pidgley tends to call it. They have been touring hundreds of Berkeley sites, ranging from single plots in Oxfordshire to vast brownfield developments on the Thames, looking for any weaknesses which might be exposed in the toughening property climate.

In July, business was bad; in August it was very good. They are waiting to see if this month will give a clearer direction of the mood in the market.

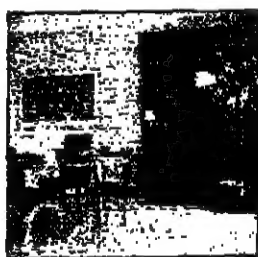
Tony Pidgley senior became one of the biggest figures in the industry partly through his extraordinary rise from being the adopted son of a family of travellers to a multi-millionaire. For his son, life has been very different.

Pidgley junior - or TEP, as he is starting to be known - went to a private school in Weybridge, Surrey. He recalls being dragged around building sites on Sunday afternoons as a child. "I hated it," he says. "The worst thing was that the



Continued on Page 2

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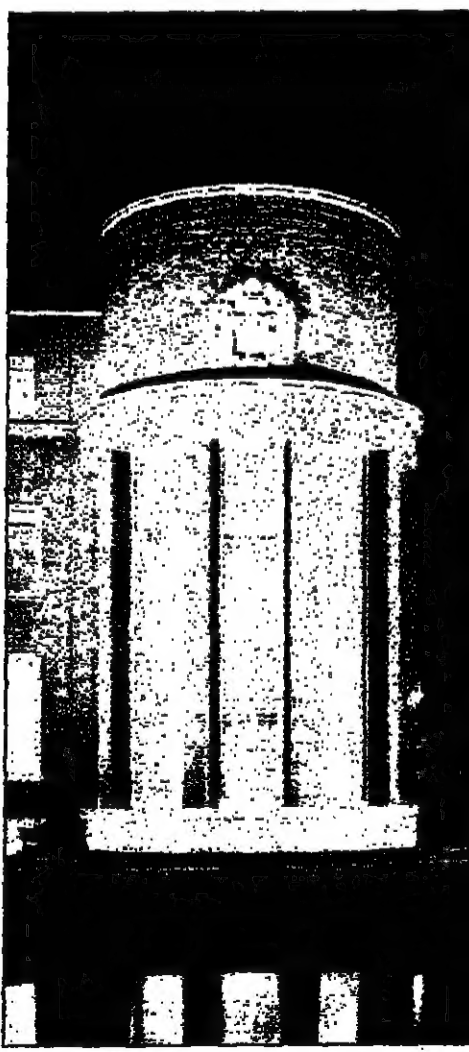
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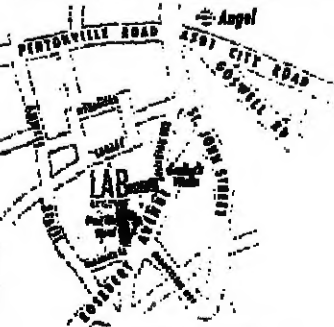


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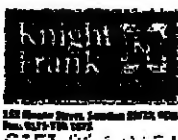


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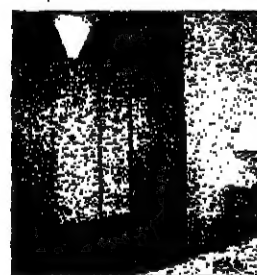


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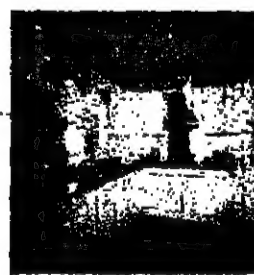
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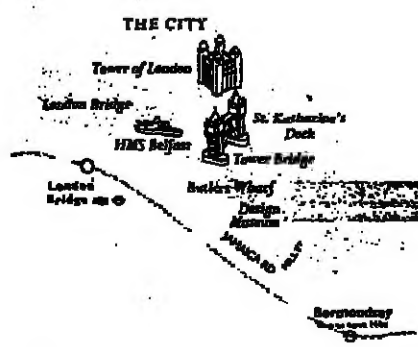
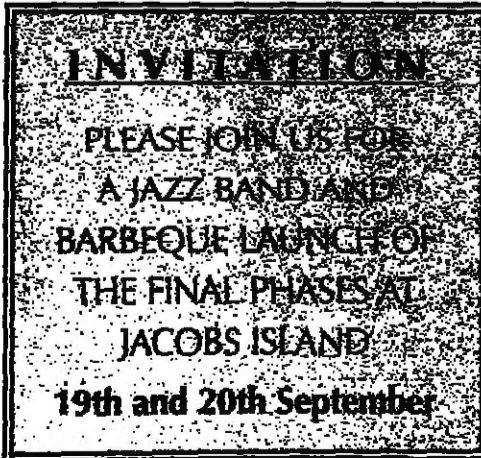
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*Arden's impression*

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*Arden's impression*

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Financial Times



# A new breed of buyer is drawn to the suburbs

Anne Spackman says buyers have different priorities from those who moved out of town centres in the 1930s

The suburbs have always been sneered at. One of their fiercest early critics was H.G. Wells who described a new estate of semi-detached homes between Surbiton and Esher in Surrey as a "bright fun-growth... of little red-and-white rough-cast villas, with meretricious gables and very brassy window blinds".

To the general public, such criticisms were irrelevant. They voted with their feet. Between the wars, the population of areas such as Sutton and Chesson and Epsom and Ewell doubled each decade, while London witnessed mass outward migration.

For most people, the new houses, with hot water, inside bathrooms and electricity, were a blessed relief from the rented slums of the city. They were clean, had gardens and, at prices of around £400 in 1932, were affordable to many working people.

Today, the nearest equivalent would cost upwards of £100,000 and include several "extra" items as standard. Barratt's very popular "Maidstone" three-bedroom semi has two bathrooms and a downstairs cloakroom, central heating and a fully fitted kitchen.

One reason builders could offer cheap homes was the low price of land in areas of outer London near the fast-developing railway lines. Land typically made up only 15 to 20 per cent of the price of a house: today the figure is between 30 and 50 per cent.

Developers are increasingly willing to pay high prices because of the scarcity value of good suburban sites and the continuing popular enthusiasm for living in them. They are discovering that the new breed of buyer from the city has a very different set of criteria from its 1930s counterpart.

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## The stigma attached to terraces has been replaced by a certain cachet

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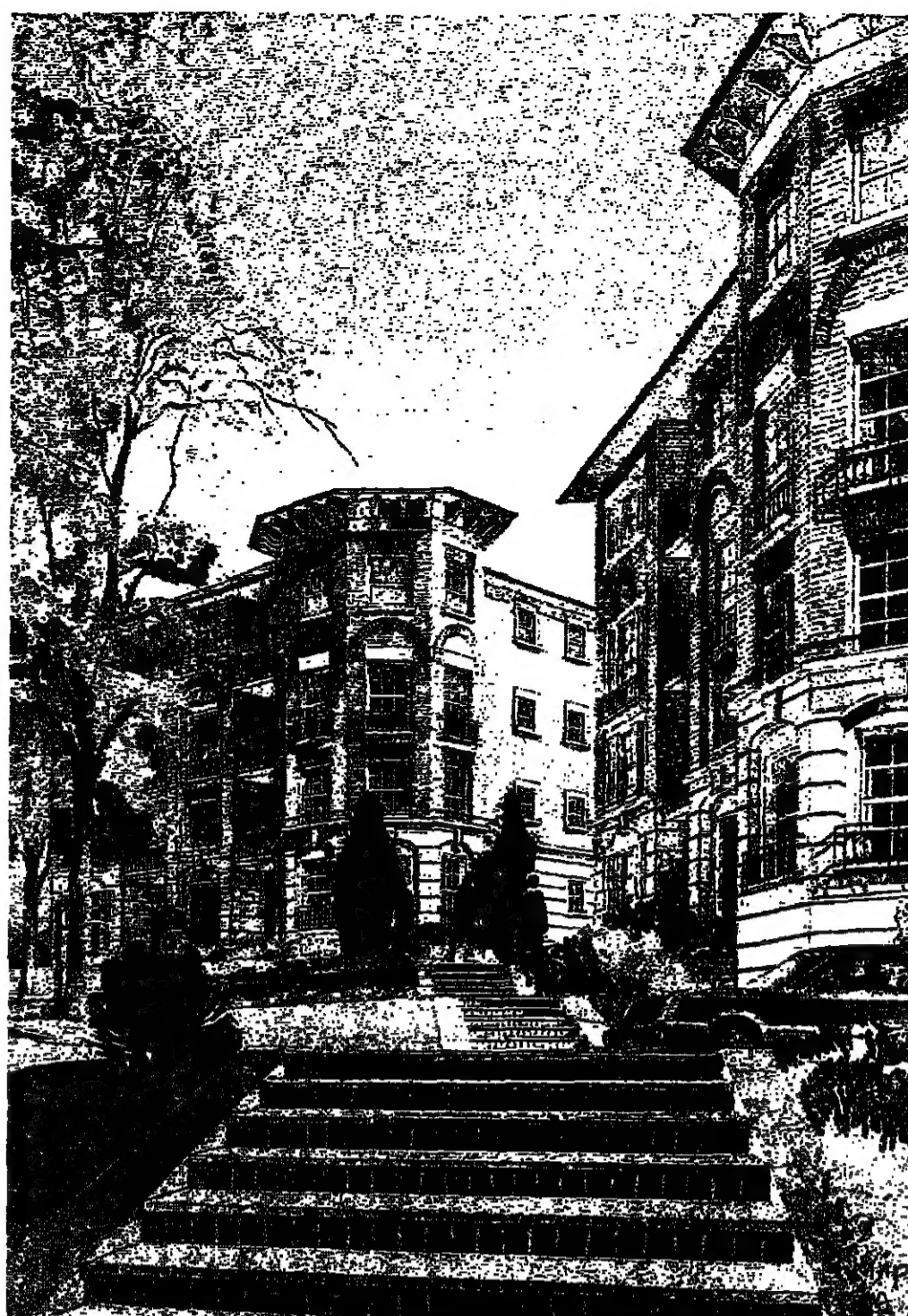
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Wimbledon Parkside: a mix of apartments, mews houses and townhouses for the suburbs

land, by building at higher densities, but retaining communal gardens. It also helps suburbs avoid the aesthetic monotony of most 20th-century housing estates, with their rows of cul-de-sacs of near identical properties, with no strong architectural shape.

In 1927, a billboard on a new estate in Purley claimed: "No pair of houses alike in road". Today, the houses are more likely to be

identical, but they will be part of a development which has a central focus and integral design.

Such developments may also halt the spread of "suburbanisation" which Wells envisaged at the beginning of this century. As railway and tram lines spread ever outwards from the city, he pointed out that commuters could live anywhere within a 30-mile radius of London.

"Is it not too much to say that the London citizen of the year 2000 may have a choice of nearly all England and Wales south of Nottingham and east of Exeter as his suburb?" he asked. Ten years ago, the answer might have been yes. Now it is starting to look less likely.

H.G. Wells' extracts from "London: A Social History" by Professor Roy Porter

## On the Move Where breeding is a way of life

The Brookside Stud at Chippenham, five miles from Newmarket, is still a gleam in the eye rather than a going concern. There are 71 acres of pasture, a bungalow and temporary buildings, but it has planning consent, granted in August 1984, for a substantial house plus a manager's quarters and two yards with accommodation for stable lads and horses. Brown of Bury St Edmunds (01284-725715) suggests a price of £485,000.

In Ireland, Coolmore is a late Georgian (1828) house in Co Kilkenny on 200 acres of paddocks and 40 of woods, which has been a stud farm for 10 years. It has 20 loose boxes and a walled outdoor riding school, as well as salmon fishing on the river Nare. Windsor Clive International in Ramsbury (01673-521155) and Jordan Auctioneers in Newbridge, Co Kildare (000353-45-433550) are selling at a guide price of IR£1.5m by private treaty, or by auction in Kilkenny on October 15.

In Cornwall, Treglossick at St Keverne on the Lizard peninsula is a smart-looking white-painted farmhouse with two businesses - holiday lets in two cottages, and a children's riding centre with a bunk room that can sleep 10 children between six and 16. The house, cottages, bunk room and other buildings are on offer from Jackson-Stops in Exeter (01392-214222) for £575,000, and the equestrian yard, which includes an American barn with six loose boxes and an all-weather manege, for a further £220,000.

Gerald Cadogan

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## Know your limit – and don't get carried away



TO HIM WHO HATH

# The bigger the house, the bigger the rise in value

Anne Spackman looks at how prices have risen unevenly over the last decade

**A**s the property market has grown increasingly fragmented during the decade, there is clear evidence that the greatest gains have been made by those at the top.

The more expensive your house, the more it is likely to have risen in value over the past 10 years.

The story is true across the country, although London has outperformed all other areas. With the mainstream market already flat-trending out, Nationwide building society reported its first price fall in August for 30 months – that disparity looks set to remain.

The evidence supports the housebuilders' policy of shifting towards the top end of the market. One recent example was the purchase by Laing Homes of a stake in up-market, Surrey-based Octagon.

Figures from FPD Savills Research comparing different types of property within the prime London and country house markets, show that houses have outperformed flats and bigger properties have outperformed smaller ones.

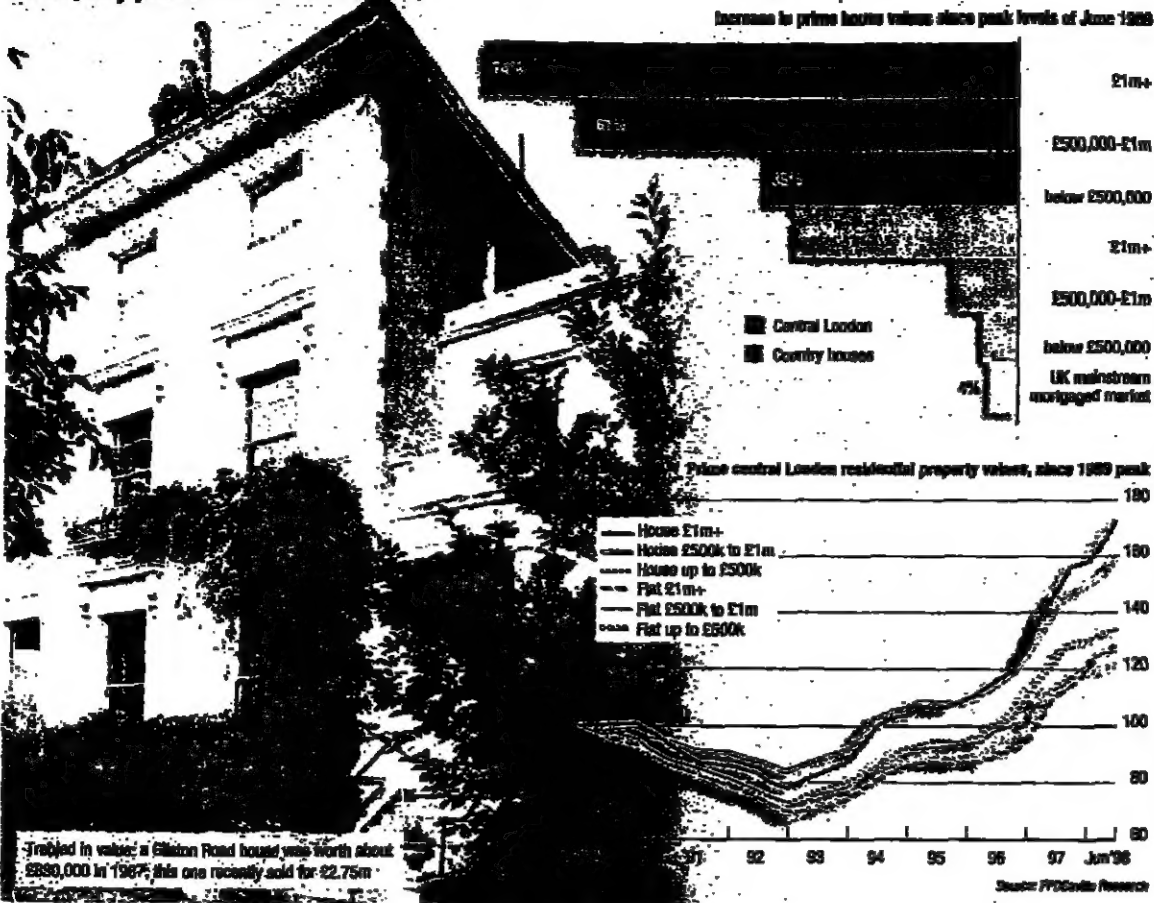
London houses worth more than £1m are up by an average of 74 per cent on their June 1989 value. Houses worth less than £500,000 are up 35 per cent over the same period.

While big flats have outperformed small flats, the greatest difference is between the performance of flats and houses. While houses priced between £500,000 and £1m have risen 61 per cent, flats of the same value have gone up just 27 per cent.

These rises compare with an increase of just 4 per cent in the mainstream market (mortgaged properties with an average value of £70,000) over the same period.

Estate agents have plenty of specific examples of properties which illustrate the

## Property prices



### trend.

They show that the very best houses have more than trebled in value. Friend and Falcke sold an unmodernised house in Giltton Road, London SW10, for £880,000 in 1987. In December of last year they sold its similarly unmodernised next-door neighbour for £2.7m.

In Holland Park, which has some of London's largest freehold houses, the story is the same. De Groot Collis sold a traditional double-fronted, seven-bedroom house with indoor swimming pool for £3m in 1988. Similar houses are currently selling for between £5m and £8m.

Winkworth is currently asking £3.25m for one of the

best houses in Notting Hill. Giles Hoskins of Winkworth believes a similar property would have fetched just under £1m in 1989.

These figures are only comparing differences between properties in smart locations. Estate agents with offices covering a mixed London neighbourhood show even starker comparisons.

Hamptons' Dulwich office, which also covers Camberwell, reports that poorer two-bedroom flats have risen in value by around 12 per cent since 1988 and are now worth about £200,000. By contrast, five-bedroom family houses have gone up 86 per cent to around £850,000.

The FPD Savills' graphs

show London outperforming the country market in general, but within the country market, the same trends are evident.

Large houses are up 31 per cent compared with their peak June 1989 levels, while smaller ones are up by just 5 per cent.

Knight Frank, which monitors country property in three brackets – manor houses, farmhouses and cottages – shows manor houses rising by between 14 and 17 per cent a year for the last three years, while cottages have risen by between 6 and 13 per cent.

Once again, there are many examples of the very best houses in the very best

locations doing even better than this suggests. Large country houses with land and amenities in Guildford, Surrey, and Henley, Oxfordshire, have risen 100 per cent in value since 1988, according to Hamptons. Three-bedroom cottages in the same areas have risen by 55 per cent and 40 per cent respectively.

Agent Humberts believes country properties have improved on average by around 30 per cent on their 1988/89 values. Its Shaftesbury office has just sold Pipers Mill Cottage at Fovell Magna in Dorset for £200,000. The same cottage fetched £160,000 in July 1988. At Rodmell near Lewes a thatched

cottage is attracting strong interest at £220,000, having sold in September 1988 for £270,000.

Further down the country market, many properties have yet to return to 1988 prices – let alone values in real terms. Palmer Snell, which has offices in the west country, says one-bedroom flats are still down 16 per cent on 1988 prices and two-bedroom terraces are down 8 per cent.

High-quality property and individual country houses have been the strongest market performers, according to managing director Roy Barber.

In Birmingham, agent Robert Powell reports that properties in the smart suburb of Edgbaston have risen by around 25 per cent in the past two years. "This compares with an average for most of Birmingham of between 10 and 15 per cent," says partner Andrew Spittle.

He says the increase at the top of the market is due simply to demand exceeding supply. "Over the past two years we have seen a constant decline of upmarket properties coming on to the market in Edgbaston," he says. "It is very clear that people are staying longer in these types of houses."

FPD Savills Research, which has consistently argued that the best properties have been outperforming the rest over this decade, believes the trend will continue. However, it does not expect a continuation of the large rises seen over the past four or five years.

Savills' Richard Donnell points out that while the best properties have risen substantially in value, they also fell quite heavily during the recession. He says the properties which have proved most resilient in the bad years and prospered in the good years are small family houses, with three or four bedrooms, in very good locations such as Knightsbridge.



With a log staircase, Sponden Old Hall, near Sandhurst in Kent

## On the Move/Gerald Cadogan Simply the best in local style

**T**hese four houses are good examples of traditional local ways of building.

■ At £287,500 (down from £310,000), Fear Tree Cottage in Morston Pinkney, near Daventry, is a thatched cottage partly built in best Northamptonshire fashion with alternating bands of light limestone and tawny ironstone. The agent is Lane Fox in Banbury (01295-273592).

■ The Mill House at West Deeping, between Stamford and Market Deeping in Lincolnshire, is exactly what one would expect of a converted water mill: flowing water, a garden on the river, and a solid stone house which combines the mill and the mill cottage. FPD Savills in Stamford (01780-750200) offers it at £425,000. Peterborough is eight miles away, with trains to London in under 50 minutes.

■ New House Farm at West Chiltington in West Sussex has plenty of dark beams, and the hanging tiles on the upper floor that have long been popular in Sussex and neighbouring counties. Their purpose was to protect the wattle and daub infill between the timber beams of the frame of the house from being eroded by the weather. The house dates from 1475 and was a working farmhouse until the 1980s. It is for sale from Guy Leonard in

Fulborough (01798-874033) for £550,000.  
■ Sponden Old Hall, near Sandhurst in Kent, is listed grade II\* as it is a splendid timber-frame 16th century Wealden hall that still has a staircase made of logs. English Heritage has approved recent renovations. With 2.75 acres, it is on offer from Calcutt Maclean Standen in Cranbrook (01590-713250) or Strutt & Parker in Canterbury (01227-451123) for £875,000.

### London lets

Flats and houses are let quickest in Fulham, Kensington, Pimlico and Richmond, with 75 per cent or more being taken within a week of coming to market, reports the new Lettings Journal from Hamptons, covering April-June 1998.

Rents are more affordable than in Mayfair, Chelsea and Knightsbridge, where they have risen most in recent years and, as a result, more than half (56 per cent) of the properties on offer take over four weeks to let. On average, 23 per cent of the rented properties in Hamptons' catchment area of London and the home counties went in less than a week, 37 per cent went in one to four weeks and 40 per cent took more than four weeks to let.

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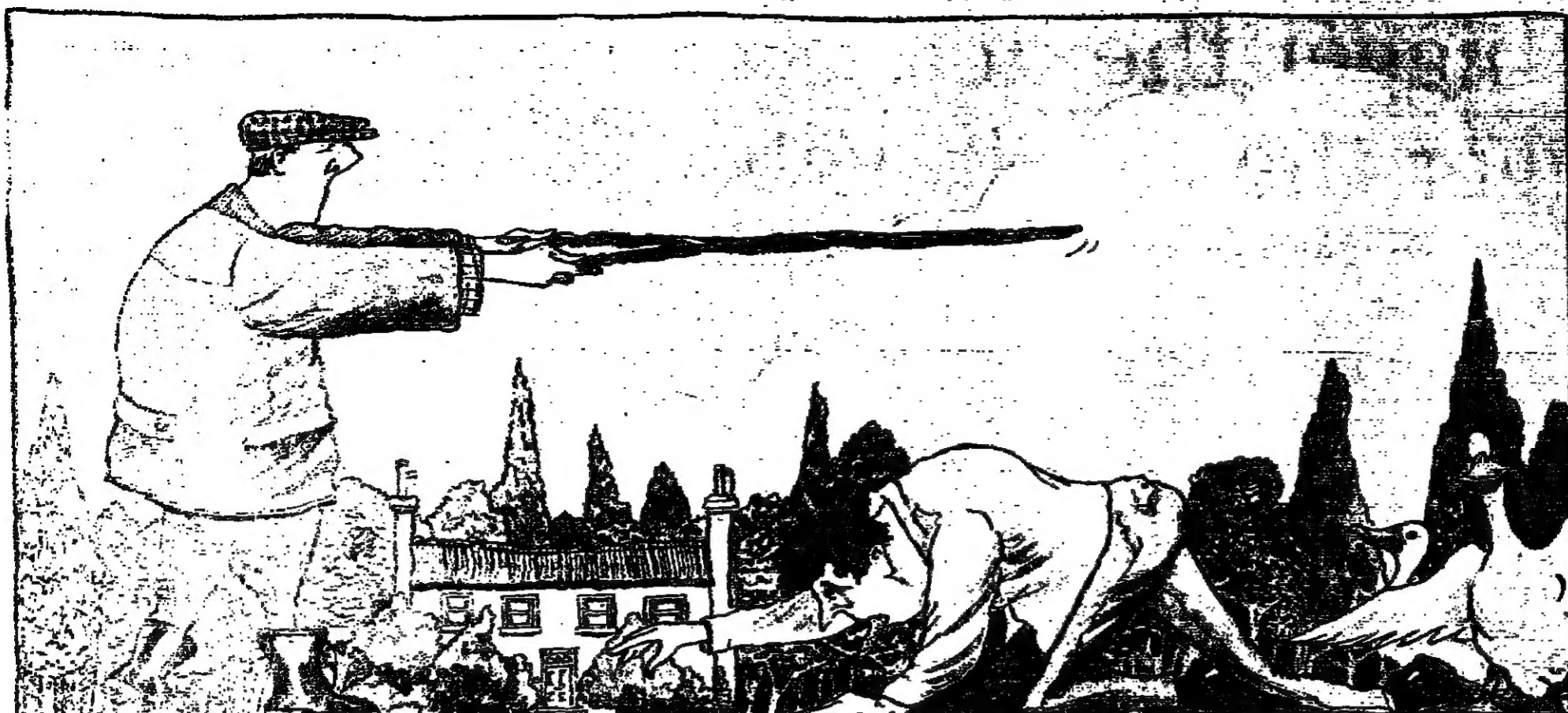
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## NOR ANY DROP TO DRINK...



## Off the mains and in deep water

Sally Smith warns that unreliable or unorthodox supplies can bring big problems – unless you plan carefully

The services of a water diviner, to be found these days in most telephone books, is becoming an important element in the purchase of a home in the country where there is little or no prospect of a mains supply.

The need for such a service is growing because more people moving into rural areas are buying up dwellings from traditional country estates with surplus housing, or farmhouses which become surplus as holdings are amalgamated, or cottages in idyllic rural settings and barn conversions.

"Water – there is no mains supply to the property." Do not be charmed by the idyll that such a statement might conjure up. The implications of that terse line in the sales particulars need to be understood. It is as vital as the soundness of the roof or the stability of the foundations.

"It is one of the first matters

that should be sorted," says Mark Grimes of Carver Knowles, who buys and sells country properties in the West Midlands and Welsh border country.

"If the water supply is not assured it will only lead to endless difficulties," he says.

That said, he stresses that no one need be frightened by the prospect of being "off the mains" – the expense of coming to an agreement with a supplier or making one's own provision can be used as a bargaining counter. When seeking a supply, sustainability and quality are equally important. Cool, sparkling water bubbling from a hill-side spring is a lovely prospect – but not if it fails to bubble every July.

The local water authority holds records, which it will release to owners, giving some idea of a supply's reliability. Checking with nearby houses will give anecdotal evidence, although the "never run dry in 50 years"

observation should be treated with caution.

An off-mains supply will come either from within the boundary of the property – best because it gives the owner complete control – or from without, frequently the case when buying from an estate or farm.

This is where checking has to be immaculate and an agreement very carefully drafted.

"It must contain the right to take water from this source, the right to have a pipeline between the source and your own property and the right to enter the other property to repair the pipe," explains Grimes. "In some cases there is already an agreement in place which either obliges the other party to supply water or to make it available – another reason for rigorous checking."

Philip Doggett of Bidwells adds: "An estate or farm might have its own water from a spring or borehole, or it may take it

from the mains and sell on. Your house therefore could be one of a number of properties taking water from the same source and there may have to be an agreement with the others as well as the originator."

He cites the case of a farmhouse and buildings converted to form five different dwellings 50 years ago. Water comes from a well in the garden of one of the properties and there is a covenant that the others pay a fixed rate of £10 a year for maintenance.

"Obviously this is nowhere near enough and so in practice all five contribute a fifth of the cost. But they are not obliged to do so, and if they refuse there is nothing the supplier could do about it."

On one of the estates the firm manages there are as many as 30 different properties involved. Each has its own meter which is read every six months. The supplier takes water from the mains

and sells on at the water company's rate plus 10 per cent to cover administration – this is usual, with such charges ranging from 10 to 30 per cent.

Even with a mains supply, suppliers generally safeguard themselves by undertaking only to "supply water of such quality on such occasions when it is possible".

The growing workload for diviners has been sparked by the desire of owners to have control of their supply. Lewis McCaffrey of Aardvark Consulting is one of the new-style practitioners, a geophysicist who "finds" water as a hobby, using science rather than a forked stick. "I tried that and completely failed."

With water-holding rocks, such as chalk or green sand, he has a success rate of between 80 and 90 per cent, on the mudstone of the Midlands nearer 30 per cent. He charges around £120 for a report to identify the likeliest spots for a drilling company to investigate –

this can cost up to £2,000. Water is extracted by a submersible pump.

His horror story – most diviners have plenty of examples – is of a group of five cottages supplied by a spring. Someone nearby decided to dig a pond and the spring failed for the first time in 200 years.

Grimes says that diviners in his area will provide a comprehensive service, charging between £3,000 and £5,000 to find water, drill, install pipework and connect it to the house. Often, it can be a case of "no water, no fee".

It is a far greater task to arrange a supply in the dry Cotswolds than in the lush Welsh borders. Mark Charter of Carter Jones had one buyer who took the trouble of going to the pub to ask if the water ever ran out. The resultant derisive laughter ensured that the house went on to the mains. "Vast tracts of the Cotswolds

are a very long distance from a mains supply," says Charter. "In this case the cost came to around £20,000 which included items such as the water company's connection charge. The seller undertook to pay for the work as part of the deal and it was completed before contracts were exchanged."

"Apart from all the annoyance and difficulty when water runs out, there is the cost. The going rate for a 2,000 gallon bowser is £350 – and it can take a gallon to flush a lavatory."

When marketing properties with private water supplies, he always checks the location of the nearest main. Selling Park Farm at Gayhurst in Buckinghamshire, he was relieved to find a main in the road outside – its water comes from a well underneath the sitting room floor. The water has never run out and quality is good. He advises owners to keep records, especially in drought periods, to reassure future purchasers.

Doggett emphasises the need to check supply contracts carefully. "A tenant farmer agreed to sell some of the water he was taking from his landlord to a neighbouring bungalow which was being built," he reports. "But he did so without getting permission. As there is no agreement, the bungalow has no right to the water – a potentially disastrous situation."

Water quality is tested by the environmental health office, and it is far from unusual for a purchaser to discover, to his dismay, a higher incidence of the E Coli bacteria than regulations permit, especially in livestock areas.

Happily, this is easily cured with an ultra-violet filter – but not cheaply. Doggett puts the cost between £500 and £1,000 plus fitting. The system uses what is essentially a light bulb, which has to be changed annually and costs between £50 and £100.

Such expense and responsibility is leading estate owners to think long and hard about water agreements before selling properties. Richard Drew of Clegg Kennedy Drew recalls a clutch of homes sold in the 1970s. The water was tested recently and does not conform to regulations, containing high levels of both E Coli and – worse – sodium. The only cure for the latter is a desalination plant which would cost the estate around £20,000.

"We are still working out what to do. There is not a mains supply within a 120,000 distance. This is why we now advise clients to include a condition that the buyer of the house should go on to a mains supply within six months, the cost to be reflected in the valuation."

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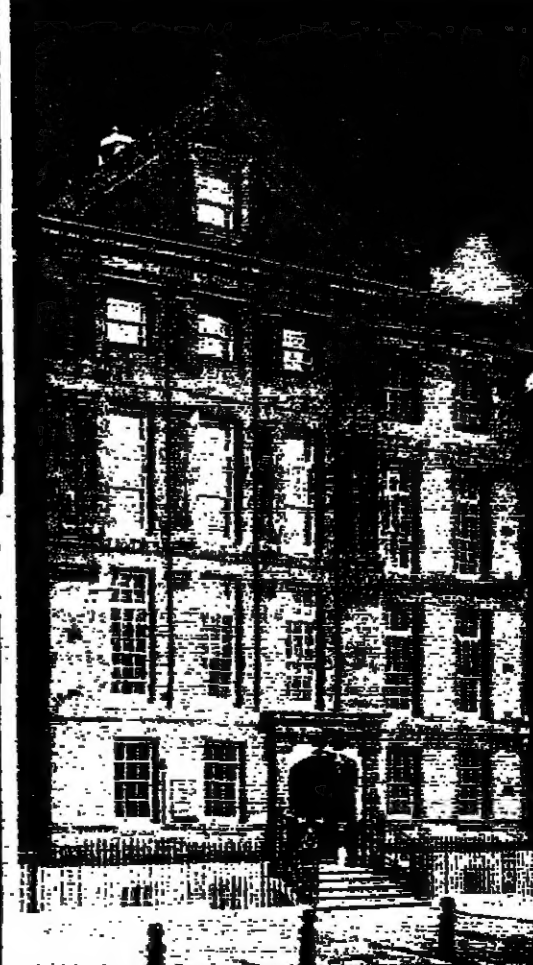
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# KNOW YOUR PROPERTY

## Weeks turn to hours in the hunt for home truths

Computerised information is coming soon to a screen near you. Anne Spackman reports

If you would like to know everything there is to know about the house you are planning to buy, it had better be in Sweden. From the furthest municipal outpost in the Arctic Circle, Swedish buyers have access to a national computer register of land and property.

For those not in Sweden, the good news is that it is probably coming soon to a screen near you.

National organisations across the western world are setting up systems for co-ordinating the banks of information they hold. Canada, Australia and the UK are fairly advanced; the US is rich in information, but poor at delivering it in a single, user-friendly package.

At the moment, even Sweden only gives access to professional firms or public bodies. For the public to get hold of information directly from their home computer, the obstacle of payment has yet to be overcome.

In the UK the first computer-based property information "supermarket" was launched in Bristol in the summer. It is a pilot



expansion. The Coal Authority can say whether it is located over an old mine shaft.

Most of this information is already available for the determined inquirer. But it takes many weeks to extract it from all the relevant bodies and, if it is not a standard inquiry, a solicitor might not ask it.

David Brown, whose Bristol solicitors' firm Alsters is helping to pilot the project, says it increases the amount of information easily available, cuts the search time to a maximum of a couple of

days and is far more comprehensive to the buyer. "We used to have to fill out forms, attach cheques and send them off in the post to be processed," he says. "Now the form is on-screen and the answers can come back immediately."

Newcastle and Manchester have already created a land and property database which could be similarly extended, and several organisations, including the Land Registry, are looking to set up a computerised national land and property gazetteer.

In Scotland, which runs its own property register, a similar system is to be piloted in Glasgow this autumn. Initially it will involve solicitors paying on account, but the plan is to install kiosks in public places to allow the public to ask their own questions.

Scottish buyers can already get a historic record of their property from the Register of Sasines, which is now computerised. They can also find out what price a house previously sold for. The Land Registry is consulting over whether to introduce such information

in England and Wales.

In Sweden, the changes were driven by lenders, keen to replace their costly individual files with a single electronic register. In the UK, the motivation is partly to improve public service, but also self-interest. Stuart Hill, the chief land registrar, says that in Canada the take-up of the service increased by 20 per cent as soon as it went on-line. The more people use it, the more they pay.

These comprehensive one-stop schemes are in the pipeline but other sources of information are already available to buyers. The Land Registry will provide a bespoke report on house sales in an area specified down to the first digit of the second part of the postcode. Anyone thinking of buying a terraced house in, say SW14, can get the average sales price for terraces in the first half of this year. Most reports cost £10.

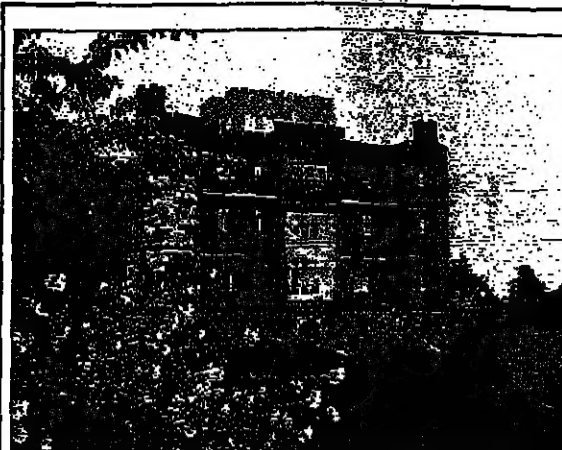
Buyers concerned that they may be purchasing in an area liable to flooding can request information from the Environment Agency. It will not give a report on a specific address, but it will say if the house lies on a flood plain or is in an area with a history of problems.

Currently, the agency says buyers are ahead of their solicitors in pushing for more information about flooding. The agency is negotiating with the Law Society to produce a set of standard environmental questions for solicitors to ask when conveying.

Improvements in the house purchase process are expected to save time and trouble, but not money. Conveyancing fees in the UK are already the subject of fierce debate in legal journals.

Many solicitors argue that the policy of cutting fees and cutting corners is making conveyancing uneconomic and leading to too many claims for compensation.

A quicker, more thorough system of searches could help solve two problems at once: it would reduce the risk of mistakes and allow conveyancers to increase their productivity. Most important, for buyers, it could dramatically reduce the current nail-biting period between an offer being accepted and contracts being exchanged.



'Deliberately grim and unaccommodating': Beeding's Castle



Darwydd: in the same ownership for centuries

## On the Move Updating an iron castle in the sky

Beeding's Castle, set on a ridge-top near Pulborough in West Sussex, dates from the 18th century, when it was built in stone and steel. It was known at first as the Iron Castle. Pevsner's guide is unduly disparaging. "Deliberately grim and unaccommodating," he writes, conceding that it has "a force rare in C19 houses." It is now eight apartments, of which the penthouse, with dramatic views, is for sale from Jackson-Stops in Mithurst (01730-812357) for £250,000 for a 999-year lease.

between Ammanford and Llandellio, Derwydd is an estate that has been in the same ownership by descent, often through heiresses, for centuries. But as there are no children to inherit, it is for sale.

The house, listed grade II\*, is 18th century, and may go back to the 15th but has been altered and enlarged.

The estate is 240 acres with farmhouse, farm buildings, and three cottages.

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Gerald Cadogan

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## HOT SPOTS

## Paris's finest stay under the counter

But Gerald Cadogan finds superb homes on the open market, too

If you want to buy a spectacular Paris house or apartment, ask your agent what is for sale "without publicity", as well as what is on the open market.

This is the advice of Thierry Prouvost of Philip Hawkes and François Boulet of Knight Frank. Both agents know of superb unpublished homes.

But there are also many good properties from the 17th to the 19th centuries for public sale, as well as a 20th century masterpiece - Les Maisons Jaoul, a pair of houses in Neuilly-sur-Seine designed by Le Corbusier.

The Paris housing market is at last, after two thirds of the 1980s in the doldrums, on an upswing, and it is doubtful whether the turbulence affecting the world's economies will hold it back. Property still looks good value compared to many other parts of the world, especially London and New York.

Viewing, buying and selling are up, says Prouvost, and offers are starting to appear at the asking price - which has not happened for a long time.

The French government wants to create a more liquid, and internationally competitive market and this month's cuts in purchasing costs will further boost trading.

Prices of flats have risen, says Léonard Weil of buying agent Etude Carnot 5, since autumn 1997, and rents began to follow suit this summer. Buying prices are now in the range of FF228,000 to FF338,000 (\$32,940-\$50,580) per sq metre for apartments de bon standing, ideally with parquet floors, fireplaces, plasterwork and high ceilings.

Property values, whether for sale or rent, are assessed by the sq metre in France, and it is regular, says Boulet, to include in the sums a third of the garden area for a house with a garden.

But there are lower-priced flats (FF22,000-FF28,000 a sq metre), and higher-priced ones in such areas as the 6th arrondissement.

Weil notes that foreigners are now buying flats for their own use, which of course they can also let for short periods, at good rates. And foreign investors, including US pension funds, have been diversifying into blocks of 1st flats, or blocks under construction, in the city and its surrounds.

The districts foreigners favour are generally the pricier - the 6th and 7th on the left bank, the 16th and 17th either side of the Avenue de la Grande Armée, and the 8th and 9th. The 9th is well placed for the Eurostar rail terminal in the Gare du Nord.

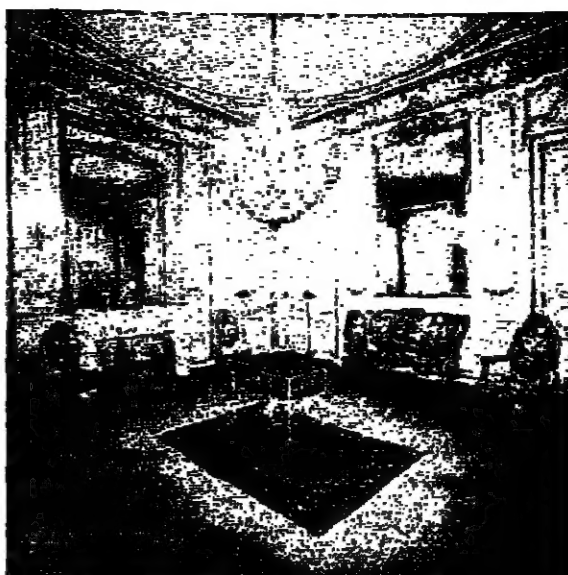
Also popular are the Place des Vosges and the Ile St Louis in the 4th. In both these parts, houses date back to the 17th century.

Etude Carnot 5 can suggest a small (98 sq metre) flat from this date for sale on the Ile St Louis as an alternative to the familiar 19th century flats.

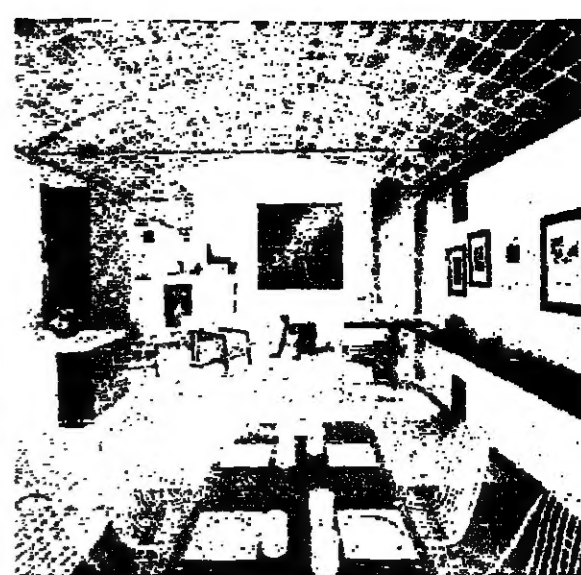
Philip Hawkes recently sold a 17th century flat (110 sq metres) on the Ile, with painted ceilings and windows looking south on to the Seine, near the asking price of FF435,000, and has on its books another at FF495,000 (165 sq metres) with elaborate painted beams in the Hôtel de Souxy in the Marais in the 3rd.

At 145 Boulevard de Magenta in the 10th, three minutes by foot from the Gare du Nord, the agent lists an ideal Londoner's pied-à-terre in Paris for FF435,000.

It is a 215 sq metre flat in a 1885 building, but as opulent as any 17th century house in its lashings of gilt plaster and pale blue paint ordered for a Rothschild. It also has a parking space, but no maid's room on the top



Lashings of gilt plaster: 145 Boulevard de Magenta



Stunning feature: brick arched ceilings by Le Corbusier

The agent also offers town houses without courtyards in the 16th (Belle Époque, 1,312 sq metres, FF830,000) and 17th (Napoleon III, 400 sq metres, plus 80 sq metres of garden, FF950,000).

But the once-in-a-lifetime opportunity in Paris is to buy a brace of Corbusiers - the Jaoul family houses on Rue de Longchamp in Neuilly-sur-Seine, the smart district on the western edge of the centre, and north of the Bois de Boulogne. Prices here are as high as in the middle of town, says KF's Françoise de Bouzeaux.

Before the second world war, Le Corbusier designed the two houses (each about 250 sq metres), with a courtyard between, but they could not be built until the early 1950s. Now, KF offers them at FF738,000 a sq metre.

They are powerful buildings and totally different from the standard architecture of Rue de Longchamp. Le Corbusier planned them for efficiency, with space away from the outside world. One house has a chapel-like room lit through coloured glass windows.

His design blends the self-sufficiency of Mediterranean peasant or American pueblo architecture with the strength of small rural forts. Slit windows give unexpected, but secure, views to the person looking out. Slabs projecting from the walls and large rectangular holes - to accommodate a fire, or wood for it, or just storage space - are Le Corbusier's version of traditional Mediterranean rough stone vernacular.

A stunning feature is the brick arched ceilings - he called them Catalan vaults - which he picks up in the external arched concrete roof spans. Earth covers the curved roofs, improving the insulation and allowing grass and wild flowers to grow - echoing the ground cover in the garden, which makes an ideal setting for sculptures.

Although he planned the houses to work functionally and simply, there is a touch of architects' didacticism in the little privacy the upper floors rooms offer.

Their materials are superb, especially the thin bricks with thick pointing between the courses, and the slabs of colour defining the interior spaces. And Le Corbusier marks out the dining room by an area of parquet among the ground-floor tiles.

These houses are in all the text-books. Rightly so. They are a fount of modernism, and so much else we call modernism is derived from buildings such as these.

■ Paris (0033-1): Etude Carnot 5, 4645 0688; Philip Hawkes, 4268 1111; Knight Frank, 4316 5382.

## Cyprus buyers shrug off the political troubles

The political crises in Cyprus have had little effect on the holiday market or on foreign buyers of property, says Michael Cartwright of Leptos Estates.

He is based in Paphos in the south-west of the island, the favourite area for foreigners, mostly British, to settle. In spite of renewed tensions on the island, he points to 1998 as a record year for tourism, with 2.4m arrivals expected (or four times the population), while 54,000 companies now have offshore offices in Cyprus.

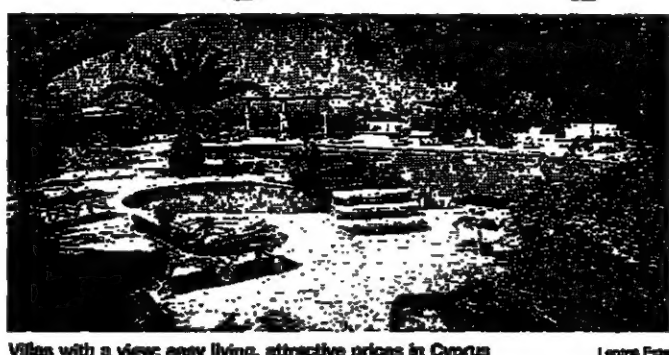
Buyers are also coming from Germany and the Netherlands, says Nicola agent Antonis Lofzou, as well as east Europeans, mainly from Russia.

If resolving Cyprus's political problems seems as tricky as ever, to the sorrow of all who love the

island, renewed discord in the Middle East is proving a help to Cyprus. It is, once again, being used as a neutral base of operations for anybody with business with both Israel and the Arab countries.

Besides its beaches and mountains, Cyprus offers much to see, from the superb Cyprus Museum in Nicosia to the painted medieval churches in the Troodos mountain massifs which dominates the island. Food is delicious, especially the vegetables, and drinks good and cheap.

It is a happy place to live and visit, but water may be a problem. Although bottled water is always available, the public supply can be cut in the summer - but not for the hotels, to the irritation of those who live there. One summer I was in a village where we were rationed to four



Villages with a view: easy living, attractive prices in Cyprus

Leptos Estates

hours of water every other day.

Before buying a property in Cyprus, ask the agent and your potential neighbours about the water supply. If in doubt, look elsewhere.

The usual choice is between a house in a new development or a traditional village house, or possibly a plot to build your own house. In all cases the formalities are relatively easy, provided the house is for your own use.

Foreign buyers qualify to buy duty-free cars (although Cypriots have to face huge tax bills) and income tax is low, with tax concessions comparing well, Cypri-

ots point out, with other Mediterranean countries in the retirement and second homes market, such as Spain.

Traditional houses have large doors from the street opening into an interior courtyard. On one side is a long, two-storey house, usually with an outside staircase and a balcony. Across the yard are sheds and animal stalls, which can convert easily into bedrooms, studios or guest rooms. Every year it grows harder to find an unconverted village house but, if you do, restoring it should not be difficult, with the help of builders who - like everybody else in Cyprus - speak English, and have often worked in Britain.

Leptos Estates offers villas in developments at Paphos, and Lofzou can find them at Limassol, Larnaca and Paralimni. Prices

for a two-bedroom detached villa are around C£25,000 in the Paphos area, C£100,000 at Limassol, C£65,000 at Larnaca and C£50,000 at Paralimni.

The ease of living and these attractive prices have made Cyprus popular. "Foreign purchases in real estate have risen from C£14m in 1975 to around C£200m in 1992," says Lofzou, "and are now estimated to be over C£250m a year."

From 1975, prices rose by between 5 and 10 per cent a year, he estimates, until three years ago when they stabilised, or in some cases have declined by up to 10 per cent over that period.

■ Leptos Estates, Paphos (00 357-6-333778) and London (0181-540 8096); Antonis Lofzou, Nicosia (00 357-6-424853).

Gerald Cadogan

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place  
for  
litter  
here

**T**he transformation of Lithuanians into a nation of homeowners has been rapid and effective – just under 90 per cent of the housing stock is now privately owned.

And as well as being a nation of homeowners, Lithuanians have become a nation of home-movers.

In this decade of transition, people have frequently traded up or down according to their changing circumstances – and in a concrete block, you know what you are getting.

Living in a concrete apartment block has a strong appeal in a world where everything else is changing. Older properties might be more attractive from the outside, but behind a beautiful facade there might lurk a host of structural and legal problems.

The privatisation of housing began in Lithuania in 1990. Citizens received vouchers which they could use to buy flats and houses. Other state assets being privatised, tables were drawn up. Values were according to age, location, size and price of the prop-

erty developed, these tables were revised every year.

A twice-weekly newspaper, free to advertisers, is the best source of information about flats for sale in Vilnius, the capital. In two or three lines, an advertisement usually gives the number of rooms, the location, the floorspace in square metres and the price in US dollars.

Because there are few differences between modern buildings, and there are so many of them, it takes few words to explain what a flat is like. Sellers give the barest of information and any information about the prop-



**Living with contrast: an old house next to modern blocks**

mer owners include émigrés and their heirs, and to claim back the property they must have, or take, Lithuanian citizenship.

There is no obligation on them, however, to be permanently resident in the country. Some émigrés who do not qualify as former owners are also buying property and

would come here and buy everything they could," says Durskunas. "A lot of restrictions were imposed as a result." The procedure for applying for membership after the EU means that these restrictions will have to be lifted, a controversial measure that has been slow in getting through parliament.

Other future developments in the law include the introduction of a property tax. This was an election pledge by the Conservatives who won the last election, but it has not yet come into force.

The first law, in 1991, on property restoration, stated that property which was not appropriate for public use was to be transferred to the private sector, according to a flat's size and condition at the time. Responsibility for communal areas of buildings should become clearer. At present, the widely differing incomes of owners makes this hard to achieve.

returning to life there, benefiting from the low prices of property. This right will extend to other European Union citizens when, as looks probable, Lithuania joins the EU. A system of compulsory registration of all residents is still in place from communist days.

Those who qualify as for-

lapses when a loss of confidence in the banking system led to many people putting their savings into

At present, prices of residential property in the city centre vary between \$500 and \$1,000 per square metre, depending on the property's condition, which can vary

considerably. Prices in the suburbs are much lower. Flats in concrete blocks are cheaper than those in brick-built blocks, those on the ground and top floors cheaper than those in between.

Flats where the rooms lead out of each other, of which there are many, are cheaper than those with separate rooms.

This is still a culture where people are used to paying very little for housing. For many young people the first big purchase is a new car, which often has a value higher than the flat or house they are buying. The choice is wise, as the city was exposed to a range of influences.

Until now, few people have wanted to live in the city centre. Many old flats were cheaply partitioned off the open space, which some

But in time, the market could well develop along more typical western European lines

Continued on Page 17

## INTERNATIONAL PROPERTY

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## BLOC TO BLOCK / RETIREMENT



City life in Vilnius: in a concrete block, you know what you are getting

Joseph Everett

## There is no place for litter here

Continued from Page 10

Some old houses still do not have all utilities.

By contrast, the modern suburbs offered space and convenience.

Transport to the centre has always been good. The flats are cramped, but they were built for a newly industrialised society. People had close ties with the country, so most were able to get out of the city at weekends and in summer.

Public housing was conceived as a temporary place to live while at work. Kitchens are small because people were expected to have their main meal of the day in the work canteen. The flats are simple to maintain, and their density makes the city

compact and therefore easy to get out of.

Today, the advantages of this kind of housing are not so obvious. Some of the older estates are very concentrated and were not built with the car in mind. With so many more cars on the roads, it is getting difficult to find somewhere to park, and the new traffic jams in the morning increase the time it takes for everybody to get to work.

Lifestyles are changing. People want flats with larger kitchens, and they expect to eat together more often as a family at home.

The new generation is further removed from its country roots. For them, it is not so convenient, or desirable, to stay with relations in the

country. They are more urban in their outlook and better travelled than their parents and, therefore, may not be as content to live in small flats as their parents were. And former conditions bred a culture of tolerance of hardship, but this view is changing.

In the short history of the market, a polarisation has emerged between the prices of flats in the suburbs and in the centre. The increase in prestige of the city centre can be seen in the improvements that have been made to many buildings.

However, it is difficult to estimate how entrenched this polarisation will become. Even in the centre,

adjacent streets - even adjacent houses - vary considerably in price. It is common to see old wooden houses, even with a well and chickens in the garden, standing next to modern apartment blocks or foreign embassies.

This ability to live with contrast seems to be a characteristic of the city. It may be because Vilnius is not a formally planned city, and also because its location has always made it a fusion of different cultural and linguistic groups.

The development of the city may also be linked with the national character. Most areas, even the suburbs, are pleasant, peaceful places. The trees grow so close to buildings, often touching, and brushing them when

the wind blows, that it suggests some kind of harmony between people and their surroundings. This languid atmosphere reflects the natural diffidence of the Lithuanians.

After independence, tracts of land on the outskirts of the city were released for private building, the former restrictions on the size of houses were lifted, and lavish, highly individual villas began to spring up.

Since the rise in costs of heating and materials, work on these houses has slowed down, but many have been completed. It is mainly this kind of detached house that the country's new rich aspire to live.

Joseph Everett

## Well protected by grey pound power

Gerald Cadogan discovers a brave new world in the upper reaches of sheltered housing

At the top end of the sheltered housing market, the trend is still for people who have retired and those near retirement to demand bigger units, of two to three bedrooms or more, rather than the one to two bedrooms that was once standard.

This partly reflects continuing prosperity and rising expectations and partly the fact that late middle-aged people receive good prices for their old houses and can buy enough space in a retirement scheme to allow them to keep more of their cherished bits of furniture. And after selling the old and buying the new, they should still have money to set aside.

All sheltered housing schemes, whether local authority or private, aim to provide flats and cottages/houses designed for an easy life as mobility declines, together with central services - a janitor, gardening, and a warden at the end of an alarm button. Some also offer lunch and dinner, and guest rooms at a cheap rate for visitors.

At the top end, it is the quality of the housing that is changing - moving from good to very good - as is the range of services included. In the annual maintenance fee, does the scheme provide a minibuses for shopping, or sightseeing trips? Or washing machines for communal use? Or a common room?

Another trend, sure to become popular, is to site sheltered housing close to, but independent from, a nursing home. That allows those in the units to move into the nursing home for short stays if they become ill, or for good if the need arises.

This is a big comfort for residents, who in most schemes have to remain reasonably fit to stay in

their flat or cottage.

The pioneer of the new unified approach is Ronald Clarkson of Park Healthcare, but he says it is not easy to arrange because few nursing homes have enough land to spare for building retirement units. But the advantages in human terms are great. If someone falls ill, it is easy to call a nurse to come over quickly. "It also means," he says, "that couples need not be separated."

Park Healthcare has recently launched its second scheme, Elliscombe Park, in the grounds of

shire. Ten out of 16 flats, priced from £15,000 to £325,000, have been sold. There will also be five cottages, converted from Edwardian stables, on offer next year at around £200,000. The scheme has a long river frontage, moorings and a boathouse.

Beecheroff's third development is at Charlbury in north Oxfordshire, which has a direct train service to Paddington. Prices range from £160,000 to £230,000. The company is now working on more Thameside schemes for 1999, in Henley and Lechlade.

English Courtyard is another first-rate and thoughtful developer, whose chairman Noel Shuttleworth emphasises the need to design accommodation that can be adapted - say to install a chair lift between the floors of a flat or house - as needs change.

A scheme at Christ's Hospital at Horsham in west Sussex has sold well off plan, but one or two units may be left. At Mytchett Heath near Camberley in Surrey, EC is moving to a second phase, with prices between £215,000 and £295,000.

Other schemes with some units likely to be available include Churchfield Court at Giron on the edge of Cambridge, and Flacca Court at Tattenhall in Cheshire.

With all the developers, it is worth asking about resales. It is a fact that, although people are living longer in good health, resales will eventually happen. EC, for instance, has a list covering 14 of its schemes, from Berkshire in Worcestershire, at prices from £25,500 to £255,000.

Beecheroff, Wallingford (01491-334973), English Courtyard, London (0800-220538), Walton Partnership, Shalfisbury (01747-85242).

Although people are living longer in good health, resales will eventually happen

Elliscombe House nursing home, near Wincanton in Somerset, where eight two-bedroom flats and two three-bedroom gatehouses are on offer at prices from £169,500 to £199,500, with a service charge of £2,700. The agent is Walton Partnership.

Beecheroff, which has been in the retirement home business since 1984, likes to choose sites in towns and villages for its schemes. Three are now on offer. The Orchard in Fairford in Gloucestershire is built on the old orchard of John Keble, the hymn-writer and divine of the Oxford Movement. Of 23 cottages, three are left, priced at £195,000 to £197,500.

Thames Bank is at Goring-on-Thames, in Berk-

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# UPSTAIRS DOWNSTAIRS

## Darling, one simply can't get the staff

Anne Spackman on over-supply in the east, shortage in the west

One of the most striking sights for westerners arriving in Hong Kong is the Sunday gathering of maids. They flock to the city's central square, where they picnic on the pavements and enjoy a brief escape from their tiny staff quarters. To the businessman who pays his London cleaning lady 27 an hour and lodges his country housekeeper in a two-bedroom cottage, it is a culture shock. In parts of Asia the wealthy still employ large numbers of staff, as the British did before the second world war. Two or three maids would be normal in a large house; and the financial crisis is not yet reported to have led to any reduction in numbers of staff. Officially they should all be earning at least HK\$5,000 a month - around £400. But there is plenty of talk of illegal wages. With the mainland Chinese competing hard with the traditionally Filipino population for jobs, the pressure on salaries is downward. The contrast with the west could scarcely be greater. The old aristocratic cry - that one simply could not get the staff - applies once again, particularly in the US. In the New York area it was reported this summer

that the number of people employed as nannies, cooks, cleaners and drivers had risen by 23 per cent between 1992 and 1996 - the latest year for which figures were available. In San Francisco a cleaner is likely to be paid around \$12 an hour and a driver \$15 an hour. In New York, professional families are reported to be salary-gazumping in order to secure a good nanny. The average nanny's wage across the US has risen from \$250 a week to \$350 a week in the past two years, according to a survey in Nanny News. In the region's most expensive areas, such as Connecticut, nanny rates have risen to \$700, with baby-sitting rates at \$20 an hour. Staff quarters are re-emerging in new flats and houses in the US and in Britain. At London's most expensive development, Chesham Place in Belgrave, families have bought a large apartment for themselves and a mews house for their staff at the rear. In Warwickshire, an unusual example of a new country mansion near Stratford-upon-Avon includes a three-bedroom staff wing. But providing accommodation does not overcome all the problems. Many people do not want someone living in their home, nor do they want the hassle of employ-



ing several staff. That is particularly true of people with more than one home. In Europe, developers are responding by building in more and more services in their up-market developments. One of the most progressive is in Spain, at La Zagaleta in the hills behind Marbella. Here, few buyers will use their property for more than four months of the year. Instead of employing full-time staff, they can buy in services such as gardening, cleaning and pool maintenance on an hourly basis from the resident management company. Large mixed developments in New York and London, incorporating hotels and homes, are planned to have similar services. Donald Trump did it at Number One Central Park West, offering residents in the higher floors the services of the hotel beneath. Both Stanhope Gardens in Kensington and Canary Riverside in Docklands are considering similar schemes. But for those who still have to find their own staff, here is a selection of suggested costs across the world, provided with help from the offices of Knight Frank and PDSavills. (Dollars are US unless stated.)

**Bombay**  
 □ Full-time, live-in servant - \$35 a month, plus accommodation and food.  
 □ Part-time cleaner/maid - \$30 a month.  
 □ Live-in nanny, sourced through an agency - \$65 a month.  
 □ (Staff working for expats normally charge 20 per cent more on the basis that they have to speak English.)

**Sydney**  
 □ Gardener - A\$15 per hour or A\$400-A\$500 a week, full-time.  
 □ Cleaner - A\$15-A\$20 per hour.  
 □ Nanny - A\$400-A\$500 a week, live-in.  
 □ Babysitter - A\$10 per hour.

**Singapore**  
 □ Live-in maid - \$170 a month plus \$200 a month

payable to the government (to discourage employers who cannot really afford staff).

**Botswana**  
 □ Maid - \$30 a month, plus accommodation.  
 □ Gardener - \$75 a month, living out.

**Johannesburg**  
 □ Maid - \$140 per month, plus accommodation and food.  
 □ Gardener - \$2-\$10 per day.  
 □ Security firm - \$44 per month to patrol and look after property and respond to panic button.

**Scottish estate**  
 □ Cleaner - 24 an hour.  
 □ Housekeeper - £6,000 a year for part-time work, plus accommodation.  
 □ Stalker/gillie - approx £11,000 a year, plus estate cottage, telephone, car and one tweed suit a year in the estate tweed.

**Tokyo**  
 Only the extremely wealthy employ staff in their homes.

On the Move

## Where Miss Jekyll had her hideaway

A Lutyens cottage in a shrine to gardening. What could be more apposite, asks Gerald Cadogan

Mustard Wood near Godalming in Surrey is a shrine to 20th century gardening. It was designed by Sir Edwin Lutyens in the 1890s, with ancillary buildings, for the great garden designer Gertrude Jekyll. It epitomises their partnership in house and garden planning, which changed attitudes so forcefully that all subsequent designs reveal, somewhere, their influence.



Mustard Wood: designed by Lutyens for Gertrude Jekyll

Much of their success was in combining scrupulous, almost Germanic attention to detail - in her choice of plants and his use of vernacular building styles and materials - with a romantic approach to the garden based on sight and smell.

Now Mustard Orchard, listed grade II\*, is for sale. Lutyens designed it in 1894 as the cottage for the head gardener; it gave him plenty of space - as was right for somebody of his importance in the Lutyens-Jekyll view of things. The Tudor-style house, echoing the architecture of Mustard Wood, comes with half an acre of gardens, including the walled garden. In the corner is the Thunder House, designed by Lutyens in 1896, an open-sided gazebo where Jekyll liked to sit and look over the Wey valley.



The Thunder House, where Jekyll liked to sit

Agent Burns & Webber in Godalming (01483-427101) offers Mustard Orchard for £385,000.

### Grand redesign

The Grand Hotel, once thought to be the best in town, is the latest important building in the centre of Manchester to be

converted to residential use, in a development by Baltic.

Marketing begins today of the flats and penthouses priced from £50,000 to £300,000, through agents Knight Frank and Julie M. Twist Properties.

This is not its first conversion. It began as a warehouse, and became a hotel in 1882. The flats have been designed around an atrium/light well with a winter garden, beneath which is the restored ballroom of the hotel. Parking will be available. The Grand is being sold as an immediate collective

enfranchisement. Each flat owner will receive a share in the management company which will own the freehold of the building. The sales office is on 0161-238 8485.

### Smart move up

Pavilion Road, SW1, is now a smart address. Number 150 is for sale, freehold, at £1.375m from W. A. Ellis (0171-581 7854), with the option to buy a garage nearby for a stupendous £80,000, for a lease expiring in 2032. The house has a large roof terrace.

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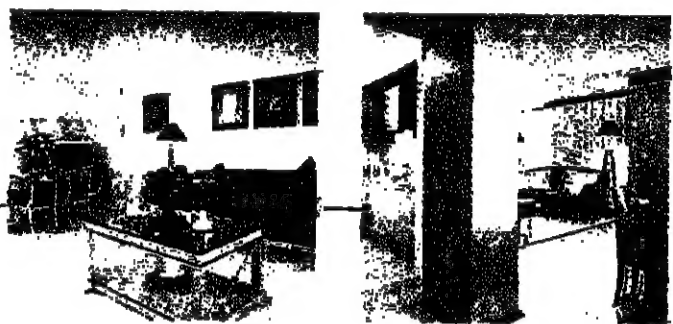
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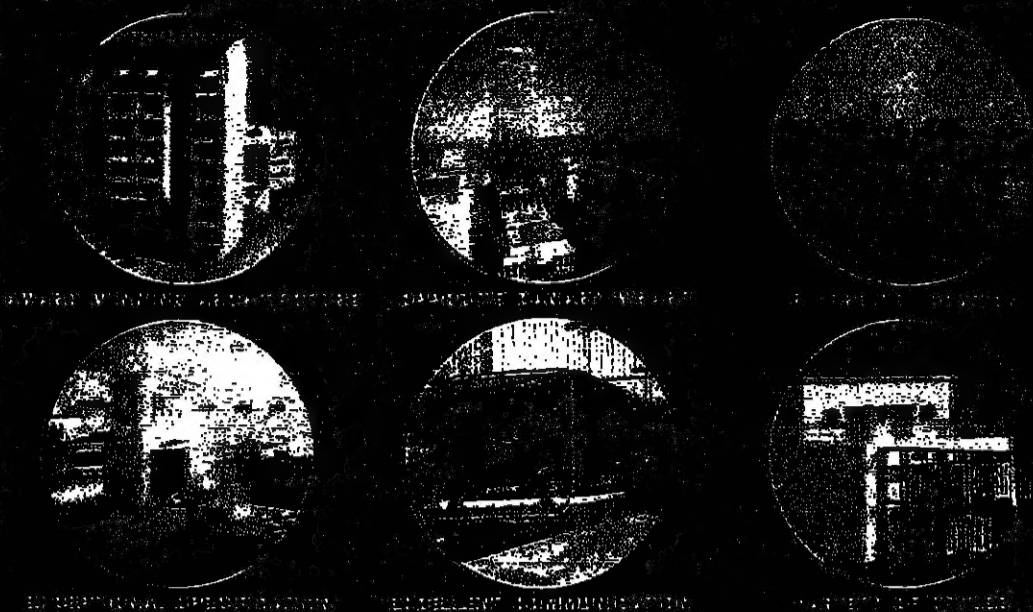


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